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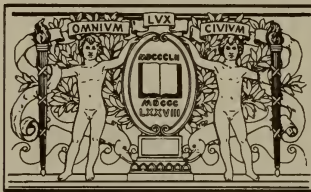
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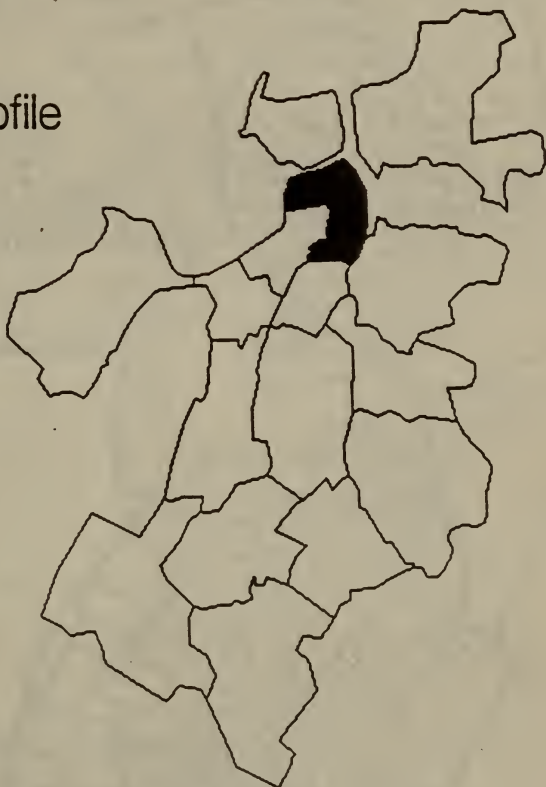
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Central

Neighborhood Profile

1988



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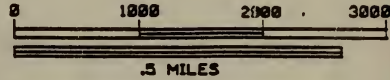
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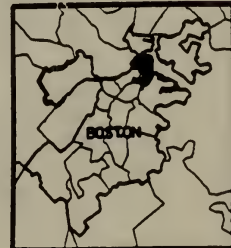
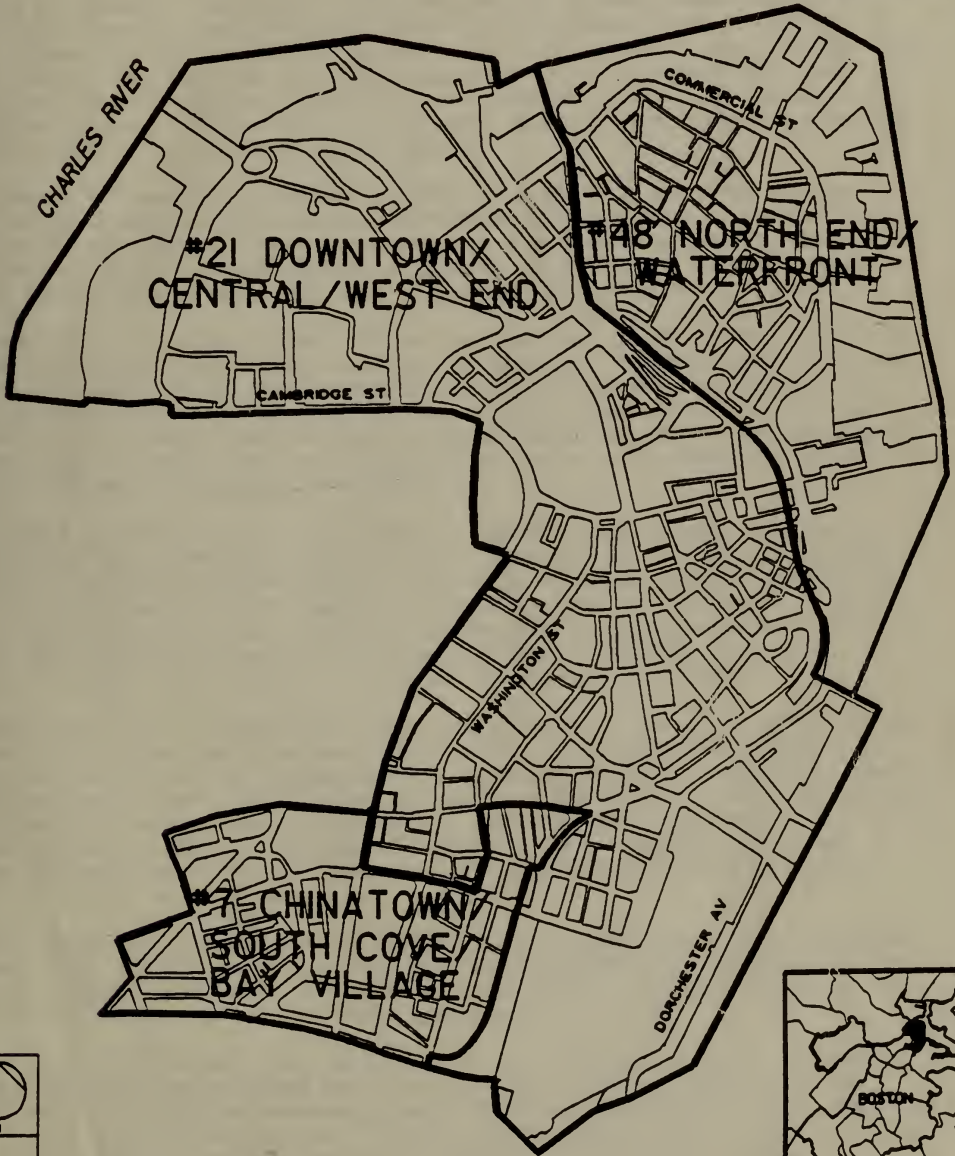
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PLANNING DISTRICT #4 CENTRAL

AND NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREAS



BOSTON HARBOR



CENTRAL DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

Introductory Overview

The Central planning district embraces the oldest part of Boston and contains several discrete historic neighborhoods, including the North End, Waterfront, Chinatown, South Cove, and Bay Village. The original Boston settlement, located between Beacon Hill and the harbor, has now been virtually replaced by the central business district. However, these five tight residential neighborhoods each survive on land flanking that original Boston. The West End is a sixth small residential area also within the district, but this is a highrise neighborhood newly created in the 1960s on land that was completely cleared in the early years of urban renewal because the old West End was then viewed as too run down to revitalize.

The downtown business district, located within this district, is the heart of the region's economy, providing jobs, income, services and entertainment to residents throughout Greater Boston. About 11 percent of Boston's working residents have jobs in the central business district, chiefly in finance, insurance, real estate, business services, accounting and legal, and other professional services and retail trade.

The North End lies next to the heart of the downtown, but is now isolated from it by the elevated Central Artery which is soon to be depressed. Tradition and order has prevailed for decades in the North End since it became the main port of entry for Boston's Italian community in the late 1800's. The North End contains several sites which are on the Freedom Trail and many buildings which are on the National Register of Historic Places. Within this densely settled enclave, streets, alleys and playgrounds promote a high degree of resident interaction.

The adjoining Waterfront area, once a vibrant shipping center, is now, as a result of urban renewal, one of Boston's newest residential communities. Although geographically part of the North End, socially and physically it is quite different. Its housing stock consists primarily of "new" units in renovated warehouses and wharf buildings, recently constructed townhouse units on Union Wharf, the high-rise Harbor Towers, and two mid-rise elderly complexes. The majority of the Waterfront population consists of younger, relatively affluent one and two person households.

Chinatown/South Cove is another tight little enclave located just south of the central business district, that also encompasses diverse uses: residential, light industrial, institutional, and commercial. Chinatown and Tufts New England Medical Center both contend for room to grow. As a residential area near the downtown core, Chinatown has convenient access to public transportation, jobs and major retail areas, but institutional and commercial expansion and its proximity to regional expressways threaten its continued existence. Meanwhile, a steady influx of Asian immigrants compounds its housing challenges.

The Bay Village neighborhood now lies landlocked, across Washington Street, adjoining the South End. Bay Village arose on mudflats on the southwest shore of the original Back Bay, before it was filled. This small neighborhood now features uniquely preserved and restored modest, Federalist townhouses.

The downtown itself started revitalizing as a place to live in the 1960s. Unlike most planning districts, it even gained population during the 1970's. Middle-aged and younger adults who were well educated, employed in high-level positions, and had high incomes have continued this growth. These downtown residents are extremely mobile, many of them living in condominiums and multifamily rentals as non-family households.

I. Neighborhood History

The area known today as the North End was originally a hilly pasture, a peninsula jutting north from the first Boston settlement. Gradually, tradesmen and artisans established their businesses along the waterfront. Over the years, as additional land area was created by the filling of the harbor, the tradesmen and artisans moved their operations to the new waterfront, freeing up an area that became a fashionable residential neighborhood.

By 1722, the principal lanes, which are nearly identical to the important streets of today, were extended from the spine that is Hanover Street. Back then there was ample backyard space within its 36 blocks. There was also a canal through the neck between the Boston settlement and the North End, following the line of Blackstone Street, connecting a mill pond on the west (extending to what is now the North Station area), with the open harbor on the east. Piers reached out from the easterly and northerly harbor shores of the North End, while far out in the harbor "Old Wharf," now the bed of "old" Atlantic Avenue, was a jetty to protect the town.

About the time of the Revolution, the filling of the mill pond began and additional houses and the first tenements were constructed. Since then, the North End has been the first home for thousands of immigrants. In the early 1800s, the Irish came in large numbers. At that time, mansions and cottages still abutted the winding narrow streets and alleys which to this day distinguish the North End.

Immigrants supplied Boston with a semi-skilled labor force, and many came to live in the former mansions, crowded one family to a room. Between the late 1850's and 1880's, Eastern European Jews arrived and were housed in cold water tenement buildings which replaced the worn out mansions.

Italians came in large numbers in the 1890's, and since then the North End has been overwhelmingly Italian. By 1920, when the last major tenements were built to house a population of some 35,000, the dense physical character of the area was fully shaped. The formerly vibrant waterfront area was hit hard by the decline of the shipping industry, revealed after World War II. The wharves were deteriorated and in disrepair, while many of the buildings were vacant.

In the 1950's, the construction of the Central Artery began, which isolated the North End from the recent downtown changes taking place under urban renewal. Three major renewal projects started in the late 1950's have fundamentally altered the character of the adjoining central city: the West End, Government Center, and Downtown Waterfront/ Fanueil Hall projects. Similar upheavals were caused by the construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike across the southern flank of the Central district.

The creation of the Central Artery and completion of the urban renewal plans took over 25 years, but by the early 1980's, Quincy Market and the Waterfront park, as well as much private and assisted residential development, had become major assets to the city, producing spinoffs including parking problems and real estate speculation throughout the central district.

Today even more ambitious plans are being implemented to create a continuous Harborpark from South Boston to Charlestown, to create a third harbor tunnel to East Boston, and to depress the entire Central Artery. The Central district is sure to evolve further in response to these current initiatives.

The relatively small size of these many residential enclaves precludes separate statistics for each. The rest of this monograph profiles the central district as a

whole. However, a more detailed history of Chinatown, South Cove and Bay Village is at the end of this monograph.

Table Ia. Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980

	1950	1960	1970	1980
Population	38,381 (4.8)	20,681 (3.0)	19,344 (3.0)	21,862 (3.9)
Housing units	10,612 (4.8)	9,782 (4.1)	9,664 (4.2)	11,670 (4.8)
Persons/unit	3.6	2.1	2.0	1.9

Note: figures in brackets are percent of Boston total.

Source: a)

See section at end of profile describing sources, as well as the methodology.

II. Demographics

The population in the Central district combines ethnic families in the North End and Chinatown, with newcomers to the downtown, West End, Waterfront and Bay Village. The latter tend to be middle-aged and younger adults who are well-educated, employed in professional and managerial positions, and have relatively high incomes. Taken together, the district has the highest median age in the city, due to remarkably few persons under 25, and 29 percent being over 55 years of age.

Table IIa. Population, 1985*

	Total	Population in group quarters	Household population	Persons per household
Central	24,924	2,583	22,341	1.9
City of Boston	601,095	49,595	551,500	2.4

* Note difference between total population and household population. Most of the following tables refer to household population as explained in the end notes for source b).

Table IIb. Age Composition of Household Population, 1985 (in percent)

	Median age	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-54	55+
Central district	38.2 yrs	12	8	25	27	29
City of Boston	28.8 yrs	17	23	22	20	18

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

The Chinatown population that exceeded 3,000 persons in 1980 accounts for the one in seven in the Central district that is Asian. Like the much larger North End, it has more traditional, ethnic, families that are less affluent. Both areas specialize in restaurants and personal services, and both are adjacent to the downtown's concentration of commercial activity. Except for these ethnic minorities, and a small number of Hispanics, the district is virtually all white.

Table IIc. Racial/Ethnic Composition of Household Population, 1985
(in percent)

	White, not Hispanic	Black	Hispanic*	Asian	Other races
Central district	83	0	3	14	0
City of Boston	62	25	7	5	1

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

* Hispanic includes self-designated Hispanics plus those who speak Spanish in the home or were born in a Spanish-speaking country

Source: b)

The traditional families, with or without children, that make up 39 percent of the Central population, live mainly in the North End and Chinatown, whereas the 50 percent that are single are more likely to live downtown, on the Waterfront, and in the West End. The historic diversity of the ethnic neighborhoods appeals to younger singles, but space in these enclaves remains very tight, limiting their numbers.

Table IIId. Household Composition, 1985
(in percent)

	Traditional families and couples	Single parent households	Single person household	Household of unrelated individuals
Central district	39	4	50	7
City of Boston	36	16	34	14

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

III. Income and Poverty

In 1985, the highest median household incomes in the city were in Back Bay/Beacon Hill and the Central districts, and these also had the lowest percentage of persons in poverty. Since 1970, the North End has experienced an influx of young, mobile, professional singles and couples, mostly without children. The area also has a large elderly population, mainly of Italian ancestry. Although median income has risen since 1970, 13 percent of all persons were still in poverty, reflecting the split in occupations and age between the longer-standing residents and the newcomers.

Table IIIa. Median Household Income and Portion in Poverty, 1979 and 1984

	Median household income		Percent in poverty			
	1979	1984	1979 all persons	1984 all persons	1984 all families	1984 unrelated persons
Central district	\$14,906	\$32,500	15	8	5	13
City of Boston	12,530	19,250	20	21	22	17

Source: b)

IV. Mobility and Migration

A remarkably high 33 percent of the residents in the Central district were born in Europe or elsewhere, revealing the continuing influx of immigrants into the North End

and Chinatown, as well as new residents elsewhere. Fully 60 percent of the residents in the district have been in their current homes for two to ten years.

Table IVa. Place of Birth of 1985 Residents
(in percent)

	Massachusetts	Other U.S. and Canada	Europe	Elsewhere
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Central district	47	20	12	21
City of Boston	55	25	5	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

Table IVb. Years in Dwelling Unit of 1985 Household Residents
(in percent)

	<2	2-5	6-10	11-15	16+
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Central district	19	36	24	2	19
City of Boston	28	27	16	10	19

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

V. Employment

Quincy Market, Government Center and the Waterfront are all major sources of employment serving the needs of Central district residents among others. Almost eclipsed by the central business district, the ethnic enclaves also contribute their own sources of employment. Although educational attainment of their residents was low -- only one-third of the adults, 25 years and over, were high school graduates -- labor force participation was high, particularly for males. Low family incomes resulted from low-paying jobs in food services and retail trade, held by many residents.

Workplaces in Chinatown, south of the downtown, are primarily restaurants and shops, alongside a dwindling garment industry that is now being replaced by high tech and medical research.

Table Va. Labor Force Status, Spring 1985
(in percent)

	Participation rate (Persons aged 16 yrs +)	Unemployment rate
	-----	-----
Central district	69	3
City of Boston	66	6

Source: b)

Table Vb. Industry of Resident Workers, 1985
(in percent)

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.*	Services	Gov't	Other
Central district	12	18	10	28	13	19
City of Boston	14	16	8	36	11	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

* F.I.R.E. is an abbreviation for Finance, Insurance and Real Estate.

Source: b)

Table Vc. Employment Located Within Neighborhood, 1983

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.	Services	Gov't	Other
Central district	14,600	17,900	43,400	49,000	40,000*	22,100
City of Boston	48,900	81,000	78,800	171,000	91,500	58,100

* Roughly two-thirds of the 60,100 downtown jobs in government are estimated to be within the Central district.

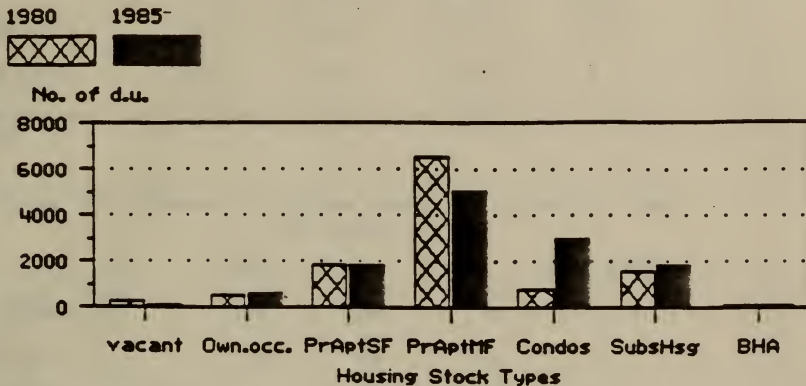
Source: c)

VI. Housing

In the residential sections of the Central district, multifamily housing dominates, with 16 percent of the stock being assisted, and 63 percent being privately owned multifamily properties that are increasingly being converted from rental tenure to condominiums.

In 1985, most Chinatown residents rented their housing units, and rents were still well below the Boston average. In the North End, the housing stock was also relatively old and until recently, most units were rented. In the past few years, however, the North End stock has become quite expensive compared to most neighborhoods. Condominium conversions are now shifting tenure to more resident ownership. By the end of 1985, conversions had affected about one fifth of the North End's total housing stock.

Table VIa. Housing Stock Composition by Structure Types, 1980 and 1985 (in dwelling units)



CENTRAL : Private Housing and Condos : Assisted Housing :									
Stock type :	1-4 vacant :	Own.occ. :	PrAptSF :	PrAptMF :	CondoSF :	CondoMF :	SubstHsg :	BHA :	Total :
1-4(SF)/5+(MF) :	1-4(SF) :	1-4(SF) :	1-4(SF) :	5+(MF) :	1-4(SF) :	5+(MF) :	Mixed :	5+(MF) :	Mixed :
1980 :	9% :	239 :	553 :	1,856 :	6,537 :	0 :	822 :	1,533 :	11,640 :
% of pl.dist. :	2 :	5 :	16 :	56 :	0 :	7 :	13 :	1 :	100 :
1985 :	3% :	85 :	630 :	1,834 :	5,030 :	103 :	2,898 :	1,865 :	12,545 :
% of pl.dist. :	1 :	5 :	15 :	40 :	1 :	23 :	15 :	1 :	100 :
Change '80-'85 :	(154) :	77 :	(22) :	(1,507) :	103 :	2,076 :	332 :	0 :	905 :
% chg from '80 :	(64) :	14 :	(1) :	(23) :	inf :	253 :	22 :	0 :	8 :

Source c)

Table VIb. 1-3 Family Property Values and Median Gross Rents, 1980 and 1985

	1-3 family property values		Median monthly gross rents	
	1979	1985	1980	1985
Central district	\$50,000	\$200,000	\$282	\$590
City of Boston	32,000	115,000	254	400

Source: b)

VII. Transportation

Over half the residents walk to work, and less than a quarter use their own vehicles. Given the dominance of single person households and the location of the district, it is no surprise that 46 percent do not own a vehicle, and only 6 percent own more than one.

Table VIIa. Means of Household Transportation to Work, 1985
(In percent)

	Vehicle	MBTA	Walk	Other
Central district	22	15	55	7
City of Boston	50	33	15	3

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

Table VIIb. Number of Vehicles Owned per Household, 1985
(In percent)

	None	1	2	3 or more
Central district	46	48	3	3
City of Boston	39	42	14	5

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: b)

VII. Summary of Recent and Imminent Development

Central Boston will have experienced the greatest investment of all the planning districts, with \$3.7 B (billion) in development activity between 1975 and 1989, according to source e). This represents almost 40 percent of all development activity in the City.

Office development will have amounted to \$2.5 B, two-thirds of all Central Boston construction activity. During this period it will have produced 25.5 M SF of new and renovated office space. The major impact years of this office space coming on line are 1975, 1984, and 1988. Of the total, 15.6 M SF will have been new construction (62%), alongside 728,588 SF of adaptive reuse (3%), and 9 M SF of renovated space (35%). The Central Boston office market areas that have seen the most significant growth include the North Station Area and the Leather District.

Residential development, representing an investment of \$325 M, is the second most significant area of construction activity in Central Boston. It will have resulted in the production of nearly 5,000 dwelling units (DU). This includes 2,823 DU of new construction (56%), 1,940 DU of adaptive reuse (39%), and 233 DU of renovations (5%).

Retail development will have infused \$261 M in construction activity into Central Boston. The banner years for retail space completions are 1978, when the Jordan Marsh Department redesign was completed, and 1984, when the LaFayette Place project opened.

The Medical institutions of Central Boston are investing \$212 M into various construction activities. This construction will create 1.25 M SF of new and renovated medical and research space. The majority of this construction took place during the 1981 to 1984 period.

Hotel development has been experiencing a come back in recent years with the development of 2,381 rooms in Central Boston. The total investment during this period will be \$186 M in construction costs, with completions spread over the 1981 to 1989 period.

Parking and transportation projects in Central Boston are also playing a major role in downtown development, with construction projects totalling \$157 M. This investment will have produced 10,857 parking spaces throughout Central Boston, as well as a commuter boat terminal at Rowes Wharf.

Appendix A: History of Chinatown, South Cove, and Bay Village

The Chinatown/South Cove community developed on land created by the filling of tidal flats east and west of Washington Street which runs along the narrow Roxbury neck that gave the original Boston settlement some security from the Indians on the mainland. Filling the flats began in the early 1800's to create additional real estate, and resulted in essentially two small neighborhoods: South Cove on the east and Bay Village on the west.

Development of each began around 1830 and over the years, Bay Village retained much of the scale and character of the original neighborhood. South Cove, on the other hand, declined as railroad yards terminating at South Station expanded and blighted the area.

The departure of its original residents in the 1840's opened property in South Cove to successive waves of immigrants -- Irish, Italian, Jewish, Syrian, and finally Chinese. Land values soon declined as the area became a low rent district, attracting the leather and garment industries. Then the construction of the elevated in 1899 along Washington Street to Roxbury blighted the area still more.

The first Chinese arrived in the late 1880's, intending only to earn a living and later return to China. Separated by a severe language barrier, they kept to themselves. Gradually, some tenements were remodelled, converting first and second floors to restaurant use, thereby building up a modest tourist industry.

The construction of the Southeast Expressway and the Massachusetts Turnpike in the 1960's demolished many marginal housing units in the area and split those Chinese that were living in the South Cove from the rest of their community in the South End.

The South Cove Urban Renewal Project, which was initiated in 1965 to provide for the orderly expansion of the Tufts New England Medical Center and help the entertainment district, resulted in further demolition of many structures and the displacement of much of the Chinese community into other parts of Boston, including Mission Hill/Fenway and Allston/Brighton. Physically, urban renewal changed the scale of the area from one of three- to five-story rowhouses to a mixture of rowhouses, ten- and twenty-story housing developments and large institutional buildings.

The filled mudflats on Back Bay, now known as Bay Village, were called the Church Street district in the late 1860's, in reference to the dominant Presbyterian Church located there between Piedmont and Winchester Streets. In 1868, the entire district, including 457 houses, 24 stores and other buildings, was raised 18 feet above mean low water. This monumental task was a necessary solution to the severe sanitary problem created by the filling of the Back Bay.

The Industrial Revolution brought additional changes -- an increase in immigrant population and conversion of family dwellings to boarding houses, economic depression and hardship, and plummeting real estate values. The neighborhood began a long period of stagnation and gradual decay which was not broken until the 1960's with the advent of public improvements and rehabilitation assistance through urban renewal. This public effort, coupled with renewed interest of young families and individuals in urban living, has resulted in the revitalization of Bay Village.

The dominant building type in Bay Village is the narrow, historic two- or three-story red brick row house with high foundation, simple cornices, ridge roof and end chimney, with or without dormers. Most of the houses have square or arched fanlighted doorways, a few steps up from street level, an austere reflection of the Federal style. Although Bay Village is now chiefly residential, some institutional and commercial buildings are mixed in, including film distribution companies, restaurants and nightclubs.

Sources and Methodology

- a) - *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980*
- b) - *B.R.A. and P.F.D. Household Survey, 1985*, conducted by the Center for Survey Research, U. Mass. at Boston. A sample of over 2,000 households, carefully drawn to reflect Boston's household population, was questioned in the spring of 1980, to parallel the 1980 U.S. Census. In 1985, exactly five years later, the same methodology was employed again to obtain an update and to identify neighborhood shifts. This survey did not include the group quarters population

To learn more about changes in these planning districts by 1985, the several thousand observations available from the 1985 BRA/PFD Household Survey were differentiated to the limit. Knowing such changes as the shift in number of persons by race/ethnicity and age group in each district is valuable for planning. However, this divides the available data into so many cells that it limits reliability tests. The inferences should therefore be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive.

- c) - *Boston's Changing Housing Patterns, 1970 to 1985*, Rolf Goetze, consultant to the B.R.A., November 1986. The 1980 U.S. Census does not specifically identify assisted dwelling units or the structure types within which they occur. It also does not indicate the type of stock in which condominiums are located, or when rental dwellings are in resident-owned structures. Therefore, available city data were carefully analyzed to obtain an overview and identify current housing patterns, as described in this source paper.

To aid in tracing the 1980 to 1985 changes in Table VIa, the housing stock was divided into units located in 1-4 unit structures, and those in 5 or more multi-unit structures. The 1-4s, dubbed 1-4(SF) for single family, are largely singles, duplexes and triple-deckers, and tend to have a high rate of owner occupancy. PrAptSF designates the private apartments rented in this stock. In 1984, significant condominium conversion of triple-deckers commenced in some districts, shown as CondoSF.

Multifamily is designated as 5+(MF), and includes private rentals in this stock, PrAptMF, and condominiums, CondoMF, as well as public housing owned and managed by the Boston Housing Authority, BHA. Subsidized housing, SubsHsg, refers to the privately-owned developments assisted under such federal programs as Section 221(d)(3), Section 236, and Section 8, as well as state assistance programs under EOCD and MHFA. The newly built assisted housing tends to be in multifamily structures, whereas the rehabilitated stock is more likely to be in 1-4 unit stock.

Table VIa also shows how the total stock in each time period is distributed, as well as the absolute and percent change.

- d) - *U.S. Bureau of the Census, "County Business Patterns," 1983*
- e) - *A Summary and Survey of Development in Boston, 1975 - 1989*, John Avault and Mark Johnson, April 1987, based on compilations maintained on "ULTRALIST" by the BRA Research Department

